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1962/10/23

83. McCone, Memorandum for the File, "Meetings with Mr. Krock, Mr. David Lawrence, and Mr. Scott," 23 October 1962

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NR 104

October 23, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

SUBJECT: Meetings with Mr. Krock, Mr. David Lawrence, and Mr. Scott

At 12:40 Mr. Arthur Krock called at my office at my invitation. I reviewed the situation generally with him, answering questions concerning the background of the decisions, the arguments in favor of the course of action versus a blockade coupled with the political debate on the one hand and surprise military action on the other. Krock seemed in general agreement with the course of action.

At 5:00 o'clock at my invitation Mr. David Lawrence and Mr. Scott called at my office and I reviewed the situation with them. They questioned me concerning the evidence and I showed them several pictures which they accepted as convincing evidence. They questioned me in considerable detail as to why we did not know this sooner, how Keating got his information and the penetration of intelligence activities during the months of August and September. I explained the situation substantially as outlined to the leadership at their meeting. I felt that neither was convinced and that both attached some "other motive" to the timing. However, they did recognize that MRBM sites can be installed quickly and with very little advanced preparation which can be detected. Both gentlemen questioned me at considerable length as to why Administration spokesmen spoke so categorically that the build-up was purely defensive and that no offensive capability was being installed. They were concerned about repeated statements by the President, Chester Bowles, the Vice President and other Administration spokesmen, but most particularly the State Department briefing held on Thursday, October 18th, which was two or three days after the original data was in our hands, at which time the briefers again repeated the statement that the "build-up involved defensive and no offensive weapons." They said they thought this briefing was a deceptive mistake and wondered why the briefing was carried on.

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I inadvertently met with Mr. Scott of the Scott/Allen combination who accosted me as I headed Senate Office Building. He said, "McCone, I guess we're going to have to blow you out of this (waters) for not reorganizing your estimating processes, most particularly your Board of National Estimates. In answer to my question as to why, he said, "On October the 4th, the Board put out a National Estimate which has served to guide our government in its policy and this Estimate stated that the Soviets would not install offensive missiles in Cuba as doing so would constitute a change in policy on their part and would confront them with problems all over the world which they, the Soviets did not wish to face at this time." Scott said that he felt that such an Estimate was reckless, it did not serve the Government in establishing policy, and it was a frightful disservice to the people of the United States. He said this was just another example of how the CIA estimating processes were not objective and served special interests. Hence, he said, they were going to prepare an article and expose the whole situation to the public. I merely stated I knew nothing about any such estimate.

ACTION: Scott apparently has read the latest Cuban estimate published about September 20th, which contains wording as quoted above. Source of his information is unknown. I feel Grogan should talk with him and perhaps I should talk with him also.

NOTE: In my discussions with all the above people, Congressional and Press, I have been forced to defend the Executive Branch of the Government and CIA against the questions (1) why did we not know about this sooner and (2) did we not estimate or forecast this eventuality.

JOHN A. MCCONE

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